

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



2007 ANNUAL REPORT

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



Division of Rehabilitation Services

Tennessee Department of Human Services

Annual SRC Chairperson's Report

Honorable Governor Phil Bredesen and Dr. Ed Anthony, Acting Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA):

On behalf of the Tennessee State Rehabilitation Council, it is my pleasure to present to you our 2007 Annual Report on the status of the vocational rehabilitation program in our state. This has been an exciting year for the State Rehabilitation Council. We continue to be an active participant in the national and regional organizations of the SRCs. Tennessee SRC was proud to be involved in several initiatives including, but not limited to, the following:

- We held an excellent 2-day retreat focusing on the history, the meaning, and the role that SRC plays in assisting VR in providing a quality service to Tennesseans with disabilities. This retreat was conducted by Emily Passino and Lee Ann Smith from the office of Consulting Services in the Department of Finance and Administration;
- We strengthened the SRC's communication through the continual use of our listserv;
- We have enjoyed a training session at each SRC quarterly meeting concerning various aspects of vocational rehabilitation services, conducted by DRS staff or guest speakers. At one of the sessions, Assistant Commissioner Cooper trained the Council members on the VR budget process;
- We sent representatives to the two national SRC conferences, which are held in conjunction with the CSAVR-NCSAB biannual conferences.
- A representative from the SRC attended each of the statewide State Plan public hearings this year and conducted a public forum to hear from constituents;
- The SRC established 3 standing committees:
 1. State Plan and Annual Report Subcommittee (SPARC):
 - developed and presented a resource plan to Assistant Commissioner Cooper requesting that conference calls be conducted throughout the year by SRC members to allow the council to be more effective in conducting its mandated responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act;
 2. Consumer Satisfaction Needs Assessment subcommittee (CSNAC):
 - reviewed the consumer satisfaction survey process and provided input into development of the needs assessment.
 3. Outreach Public Relations & Awareness (OPRA):

-is in the process of constructing a website that will make SRC members more accessible to its constituents upon its completion.

These committees have guided us in fulfilling our role in providing quality service for Tennesseans with disabilities;

Finally, we continue to be impressed with the progress of DRS's restructuring of its leadership team. One example is the agency is now in the position to look at serving individuals in priority category 2, which is a major accomplishment. We look forward to continuing to serve on behalf of Tennesseans with disabilities in the years to come.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John L. Harris", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John L. Harris

SRC-Chairperson

Director of Disabled Student Services

Middle Tennessee State University

Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Message from Assistant Commissioner

This year the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) continued to foster an organizational culture change whereby our work and daily activities are guided by core values of our agency, which support the following vision for our vocational rehabilitation program:

To enhance the development of a diverse workforce so that individuals with disabilities can achieve and maintain meaningful careers.

The Division's leadership is committed to the empowerment of field staff at the counselor level to enhance individualized, top-quality service to clients. To do this, we have increased centralized resources to guide and assist counselors with service in the field while reducing the level of detail in policies and procedures. The quality assurance staff has provided extensive case reviews, not as evaluations of individual counselors, but as management tools for supervisors to assess training and other needs within their units. The program staff members in acquisition, mental health, and self-employment have toured the state to provide training and assist counselors with knowing how to find and evaluate the success of more complicated services such as assistive technology, supported employment, and self-employment business plans. We have moved responsibility for performance management and training from blanket policies to our front line supervisors, who are best suited for working individually with counselors to maximize problem solving and creativity in client service. All front line supervisors completed management training this year by the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RRCEP) through Georgia State University to support them through this cultural change.

The Division has taken further steps this year in its Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). We reclassified a vacant position to a staff development specialist in order to double the staff responsible for training and recruiting our counselors. The staff development positions have developed a strategy for recruitment and retention of qualified counselors. The staff development team also continues to pursue training of incumbent counselors who do not have a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Division has taken full advantage of all available RSA educational grants, and we have used the Division's program funds to sponsor an additional ten training slots for a new distance learning program at University of Tennessee.

For the first time in six years, we have been able to open vocational rehabilitation services to a few clients on our waiting list. With nearly 10,000 clients on the waiting list due to the Order of Selection, the Division developed a plan to focus on improved case flow and cost forecasting in order to assess how efficiencies could yield more resources to serve additional clients. We released 668 clients in priority category 2 who had applied for services before January 1, 2002. This represented about ten percent of all clients in priority category 2 on the waiting list. By tracking the number of these clients who still need and desire vocational rehabilitation services and the estimated cost of the services they require, we will be able to determine if and when another waiting list release can occur. We continue to match all available federal funds, including reallocated funds from other states, but with the minimal increase in federal funding our ability to

serve additional clients hinges on the efficiency with which we use our funds. This efficiency includes maximizing identification and use of comparable benefits, coordination of resources with other agencies, and client participation in cost of services where appropriate.

Finally, the Division began this year the process of procuring an electronic case management system in order to increase the efficiency and flexibility of client service. Electronic case management will eliminate a lot of the dual entry caused by paper files and will provide statewide access to client files to assist with distribution of the workload. The Division completed its Request for Information to learn about available products, and it started working on the development of the Request for Proposal. The launch date for the new system is targeted for October 1, 2009.

We are grateful to the State Rehabilitation Council for its role in providing guidance on priorities and serving as the public voice for our program. We appreciate the great efforts that the SRC has made to learn about the challenges our Division faces and to partner with us in developing solutions to the challenges. I look forward to an ongoing partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council as the Council continues to provide valuable feedback on customer satisfaction, goals and priorities, policy changes and innovative ideas for improved client services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Andrea L. Cooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrea L. Cooper
Assistant Commissioner
Division of Rehabilitation Services

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
ANNUAL REPORT 2007

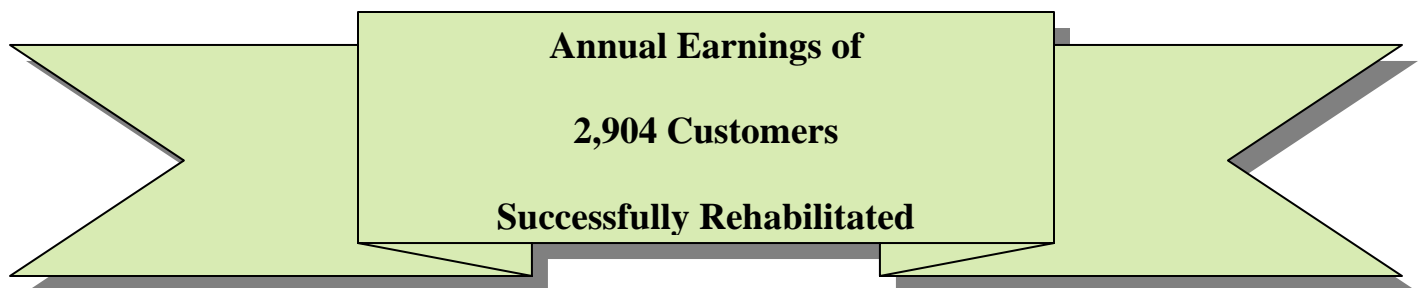
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PERFORMANCE STATISTICS FISCAL YEAR 2006

The State Rehabilitation Council and the Division of Rehabilitation Services are proud to report another outstanding year of serving and placing individuals with disabilities into employment. Below is a listing of statistics for the Federal Fiscal Year, October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006.

- **New applications taken by the Division..... 9,463**
- **# of persons with disabilities served 41,524**
- **# of persons with disabilities obtaining employment through the services provided..... 2,904**



Annualized Earnings Before Rehabilitation.....\$ 4,569,916

Annualized Earnings After Rehabilitation \$ 47,551,088

Net Earnings Increase \$ 42,981,172

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ❖ **The Division served 41,524 individuals with disabilities in FY 2006. Of those, 2,904 achieved successful outcomes (employment).**
- ❖ **Of the 2,904 successful outcomes, 2,620 (90.22%) were individuals with significant disabilities.**
- ❖ **Annualized earnings of the 2,904 individuals rehabilitated increased by nearly \$43 million dollars.**
- ❖ **The success rate achieved by the Division was 65.87 %.**
- ❖ **The Division achieved a 96.5 % satisfaction rating as reported by the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys for FY 2006.**
- ❖ **The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), as required by the Rehabilitation Act, held all of its quarterly meetings. Council minutes are available upon request and in alternative formats.**
- ❖ **The Division, through its Tennessee Business Enterprise (TBE) Program operates 150 vending facilities. They generated over \$20 million in sales and produced an average net income per blind vendor that exceeded \$47,080.**

GOALS & PRIORITIES

FOR

FISCAL YEAR 2008

The goals and priorities of the Division of Rehabilitation Services for Fiscal Year 2008, as developed and agreed to by the Division of Rehabilitation Services staff and the State Rehabilitation Council, are:

1. Streamline focus of the Division of Rehabilitation Services for client-centered, effective, successful service.
 - a. Provide services to approximately 34,000 individuals. Services include information and referral for individuals on the waiting list in a closed priority category. As of 3/31/2007, there were 9,930 eligible individuals on the waiting list in closed priority categories.
 - b. Achieve successful outcomes for at least 2,906 individuals with disabilities. Successful outcome means suitable employment that continues for a minimum of 90 days.
 - c. At least 92% of individuals served and closed with successful employment outcomes will be individuals with significant disabilities.
 - d. The success rate for individuals determined eligible and receiving services will be at least 70%. Success rate is determined by the number of Status 26 (Rehabilitated Cases) divided by the number of Status 26 plus the number of Status 28 (Non-Rehabilitated Cases).
 - e. Achieve a 96% or higher satisfaction rating for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program as reported by the consumer satisfaction survey program for successful outcome closures.
 - f. Expand the client intake process to facilitate more counseling to include considerations such as healthcare, impact on SSA benefits, and economic needs through measures such as an improved application document. Counseling provided and referrals to other resources will be noted within the case file notes.
 - g. Increase employment opportunities for clients through the following services, measured by an increased number of clients entering employment after receiving those services:
 - i. Supported employment
 - ii. Job coaches
 - iii. Appropriate self employment

2. Develop staff motivation and skills to deliver client-centered counseling.
 - a. Continue the implementation of the Division's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) initiative by developing a strategy for recruiting vocational rehabilitation counselors who already meet the criteria for qualified rehabilitation counselor.
 - b. Increase training for counselors, evaluators and related voc rehab staff on how effective rehabilitation technology options lead to successful employment outcomes.
3. Reach out to stakeholders to build resources, reputation and results.
 - a. Develop a marketing/outreach plan that:
 - i. targets and reaches unserved or underserved populations, such as Spanish speaking clients and clients with TBI, autism, deaf-blindness, and mental illness;
 - ii. targets individuals with disabilities who meet our Order of Selection open Priority Category 1 classification;
 - iii. targets SSA beneficiaries seeking employment; and
 - iv. clearly conveys the employment purpose of our services.
 - b. Increase partnerships with transportation providers to expand options for clients to participate in vocational rehabilitation and to secure sustainable transportation for employment.
 - c. Improve communication and partnership among DRS and other state agencies, community resource providers, career centers, employers and disability service providers.
 - d. Provide greater technical assistance to workforce investment (career centers).

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

MEMBERSHIP

WHO WE ARE

Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, The State Rehabilitation Council is to be comprised of at least 15 individuals from the following representation(s):

Statewide Independent Living Council

Parent Training & Information Center

Client Assistance Program

VR Counselor (ex officio, non-voting member)

Community Rehabilitation Provider

Four representatives from business, industry and labor

Disability advocacy groups that include a cross section of individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities and representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or who are unable, due to their disabilities, to represent themselves;

Current or former applicants for or recipients of vocational rehabilitation services;

*State Department of Education, Division of Special Education;
Statewide Workforce Investment Board;*

Director of the designated state unit (ex-officio, non-voting member).

** The majority of SRC members must be individuals with disabilities, and members are appointed by the Governor to serve no more than two consecutive three-year terms.*

SRC MEMBERS
FISCAL YEAR 2007

EAST REGION

Karen Harrison -- Greeneville, TN
Kim Williams – Soddy Daisy, TN
Robert Rosenbaum – Knoxville, TN

MIDDLE REGION

Andrea Cooper (Assistant Commissioner of DRS) – Nashville, TN
Cindy Gardner – Nashville, TN
Ann Hampton – Nashville, TN
Jan Bush (VR Counselor) – Columbia, TN
John Harris, SRC Chair – Murfreesboro, TN
John Majors – Nashville, TN
Greta Gipson – Decherd, TN
Maria Ramirez – Nashville, TN
Jason McAlexander – Nashville, TN
Merry Adams – Smyrna, TN

WEST REGION

Ray Stevenson, SRC Vice-Chair – Martin, TN
Lynda Crisp, SRC Secretary – Bolivar, TN
Lordy Smith – Memphis, TN
Kevin Lofton – Memphis, TN

SUCCESS STORIES

Region 1, January through March

The Case of the Quarter for January through March was submitted by his counselor, Christy Starnes. The client, Eric, sustained a traumatic brain injury on his 23rd birthday through a motor vehicle accident that resulted in extensive injuries, including loss of vision in his right eye and loss of a kidney. His physicians initially recommended that he enter a nursing home after he was released from the hospital after an 8-month stay.

Through the help of his family and VR, Eric reached a successful employment outcome rehabilitated. He made great strides because of his own perseverance and his own inner strength, but it is very clear that the guidance and the services provided by Christy, Mary Babb (employment counselor), and other VR staff made the difference in helping him to reach his maximum potential.

Region 8, April through June

Counselor Jerry Church and her client, Seima, were honored as both Case of the Quarter and Case of the Year. Seima overcame many personal hardships to achieve vocational success. He came to the United States to seek education and work. Because of early childhood polio he needed a wheelchair, but came to this country on homemade crutches.

Jerry has glowing praise for this man who never complained or sought favors. He maintained a quiet dignity throughout his education, and even when he developed the additional disability of diabetes, he continued to maintain his grades and his educational achievements. Today, with the help of Jerry Church and the staff of the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center, Seima is working full time as an accountant and has applied for American citizenship in order to be a permanent resident and a proud American citizen.

Region 3, July through September

The Case of the Quarter for the July – September quarter of 2006, selected by the members of the Staff Advisory Council, was Amanda, a client of Leslie Hull in Region 3. Amanda was initially served as a transition student with disabilities of mental retardation and back problems. She ran away from home but returned after being gone for 7 months, and she is now living with her mother and stepfather.

Amanda received services including vocational evaluation, situational assessment, and job readiness training through the Employee Development Program because she had no previous work experience and little knowledge of appropriate work behaviors and social skills. As a result of these services, Amanda obtained employment, with the assistance of her Employment Counselor, Evan Johnson, at a new motel near her home.

Amanda was hired for part time work but within a week of starting the job, she was being called in to work due to other employees not showing up. Within a month, she was working full time. She takes great pride in her work and is very proud that she is the only “original maid left – all the others quit.” Soon after that she was promoted to “head maid” and continues to hold this position.

Region 3, October through December

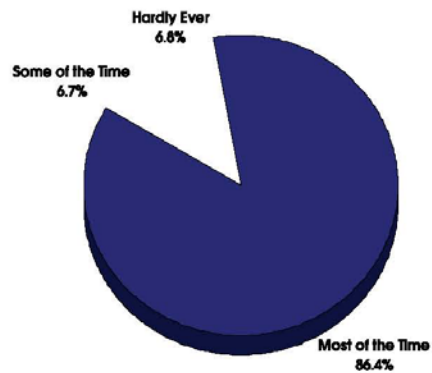
Counselor Sonya Hood of the Manchester office nominated her client Greg., who was chosen by the Staff Advisory Council as Case of the Quarter for the October to December quarter. Greg, who has schizoaffective disorder, bipolar type had been in and out of mental health facilities throughout most of his teenage life. As a result of work adjustment services and counseling and guidance, Greg began to come out of his shell. He eventually became a leader in the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) workshop. The TRC employment counselor assisted him in finding work at a lumber company near his home. He has been working since July 31, 2006 and loves it. He now has self confidence and the desire to excel in his career.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE
CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY**

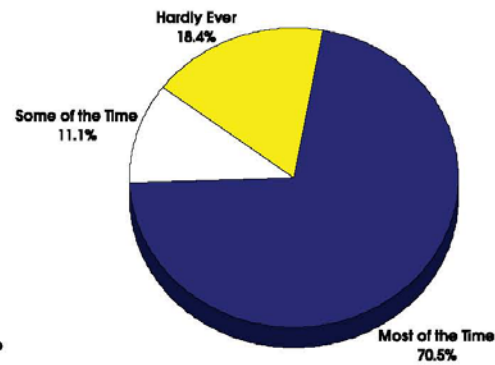
**PREPARED BY
SPARKS BUREAU OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH
CENTER FOR MANPOWER STUDIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS**

Did your counselor try to match your skills with the jobs available at the time?

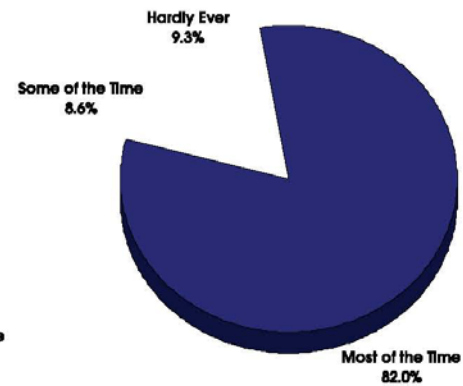
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



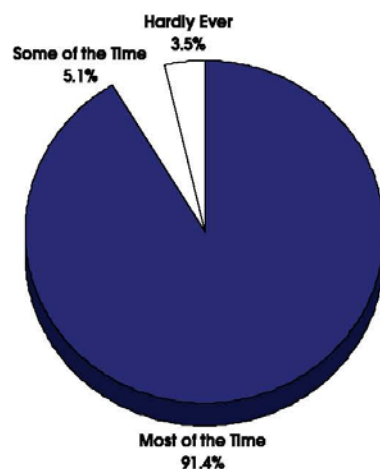
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Most of the Time	1,388	329	553
Some of the Time	108	52	58
Hardly Ever	110	86	63

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

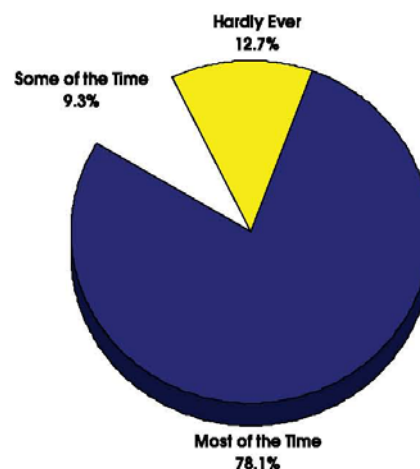


Did your vocational rehabilitation counselor try to understand your problems and needs?

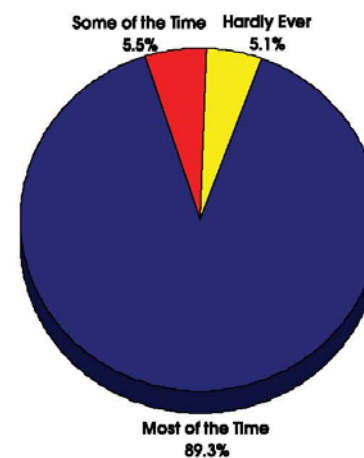
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



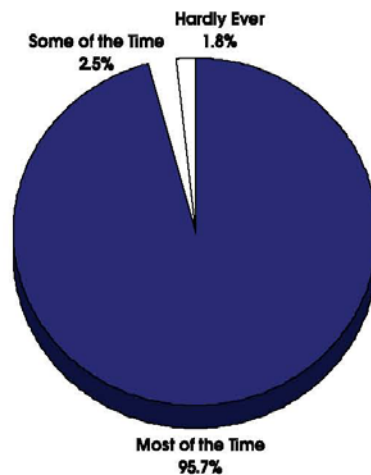
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Most of the Time	1,524	388	645
Some of the Time	85	46	40
Hardly Ever	58	63	37

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

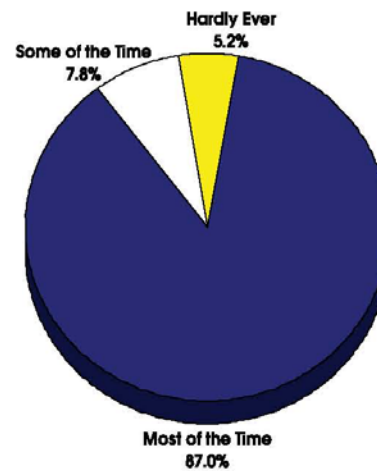


Did the counselors and staff treat you with dignity and respect?

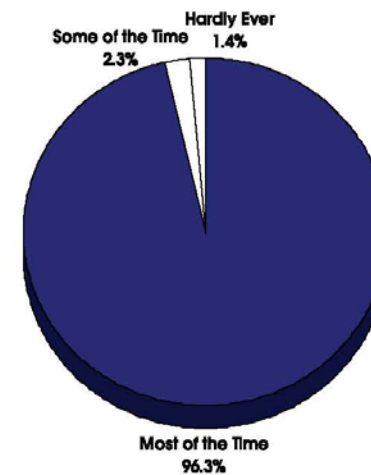
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



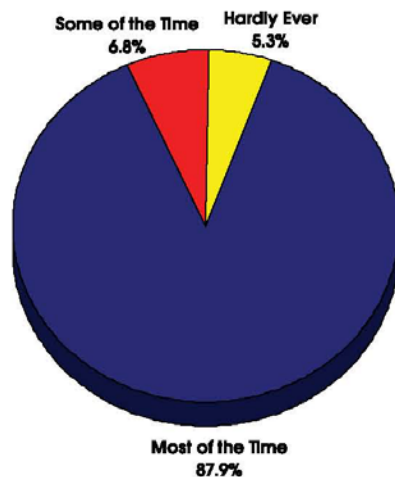
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Most of the Time	1,602	434	699
Some of the Time	42	39	17
Hardly Ever	30	26	10

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

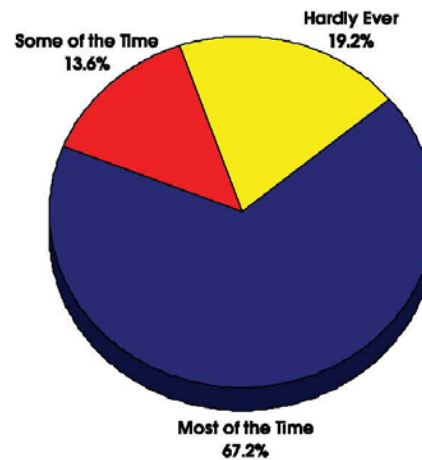


Did the services you received through the program meet your needs?

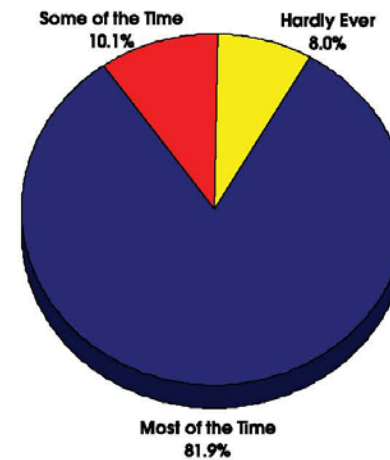
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



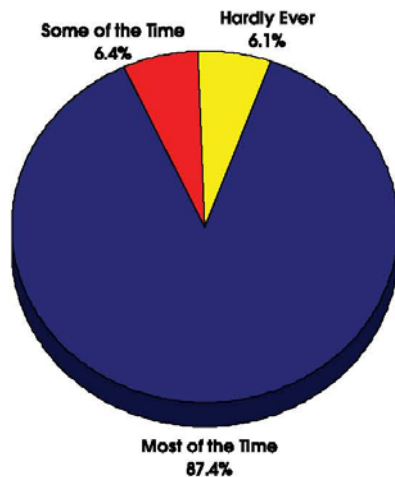
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Most of the Time	1,463	332	593
Some of the Time	113	67	73
Hardly Ever	88	95	58

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

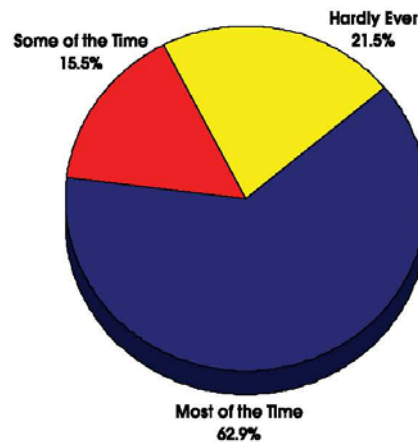


Do you feel better about your employment future because of the services and training you received through vocational rehabilitation?

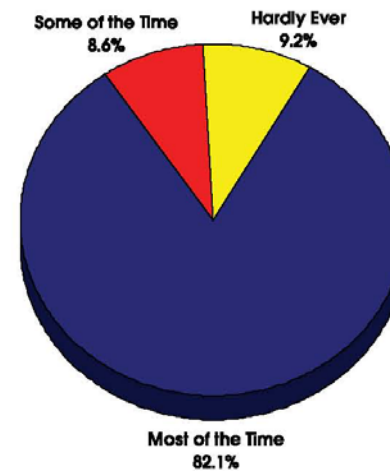
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



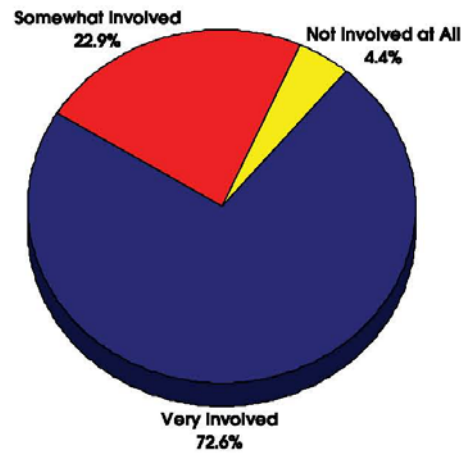
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Most of the Time	1,440	304	589
Some of the Time	106	75	62
Hardly Ever	101	104	66

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

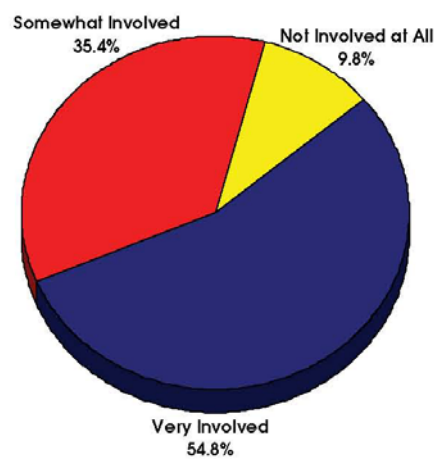


How involved were you in developing your vocational goals?

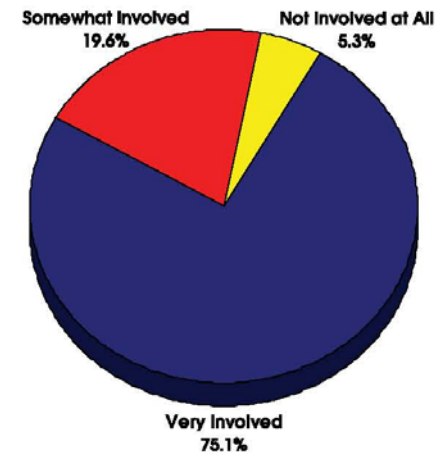
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



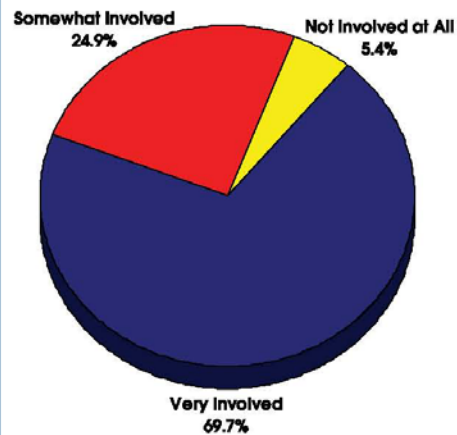
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Very Involved	1,195	262	537
Somewhat Involved	377	169	140
Not Involved at All	73	47	38

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

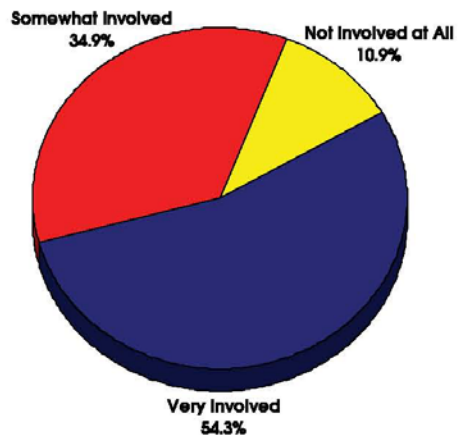


How involved were you in selecting your program services?

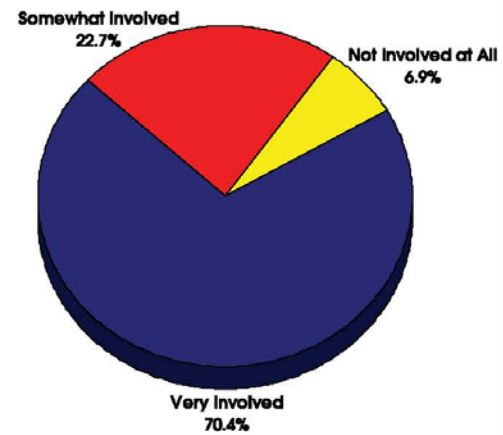
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



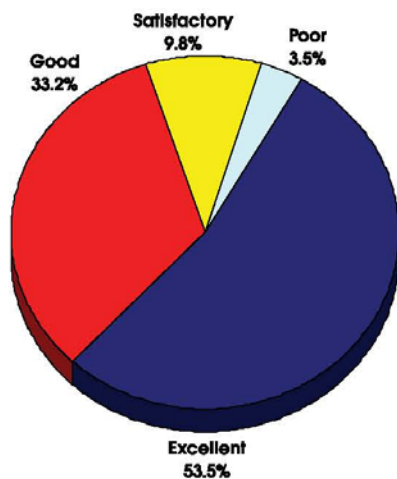
Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Very Involved	1,144	260	502
Somewhat Involved	409	167	162
Not Involved at All	89	52	49

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

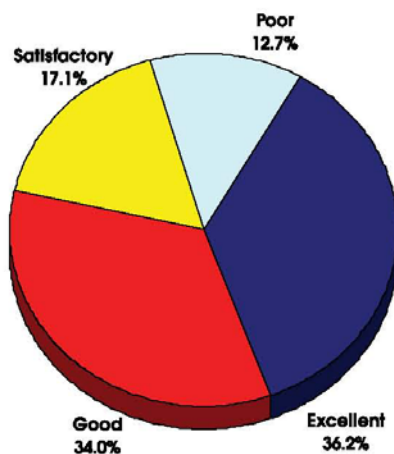


How would you rate the overall quality of the Vocational Rehabilitation program?

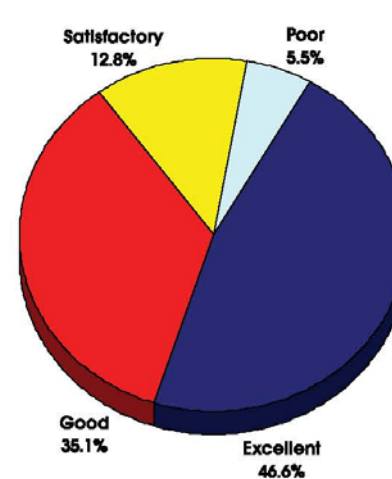
Closure 26 Participants



Closure 28 Participants



Active Client Participants



Responses	Number Who Responded		
	Closure 26 Participants	Closure 28 Participants	Active Client Participants
Excellent	894	180	336
Good	555	169	253
Satisfactory	163	85	92
Poor	58	63	40

Source: Sparks Bureau of Business and Economic Research, The University of Memphis.

